

education in our country—not only Head Start—but how it affects education generally is unacceptable.

What this bill would do if it were to pass—it is not numbers; it is not numbers only. What does it do to our port security? The Presiding Officer is from the State of New York. Every day there are evil people trying to do damage to the people and the State of New York in the ports. Our airport security. We still have to look out for these bad people, the shoe bombers and other people who come up with all of these very bad ways to try to harm America.

So for someone over here on the other side to say they are looking at H.R. 1 and they will probably all vote for it because of the numbers—how insulting to the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:40 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

AUTHORIZATION TO APPOINT ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the President pro tempore of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort the Honorable Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, to the House Chamber for the joint meeting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESPONSIBLE DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I wish to follow up on what was said by the majority leader. This exercise we are engaged in here, this conversation about how to finish this fiscal year which ends on October 1, is one that I think has gotten out of hand, and I will tell you why.

I know the debt is a serious problem facing America. I know the deficit is

something that threatens our economy and our way of living. I also know there are sensible, thoughtful ways to deal with it. One of them was addressed by the Bowles-Simpson deficit commission which I served on and voted for in terms of their final report. I disagreed with some things, but that is the nature of a compromise and the nature of moving our Nation forward. What we tried to do in that commission was to take a look at this challenge and not solve it in a month or 6 months, but say, How can we solve this, do it in a sensible, responsible way, and still grow the economy?

Right now, a few feet away from where we are meeting, are some of the best minds in America. They are sitting in a room, meeting with Senators. They represent the high-tech industries of America. I just heard Mr. John Chambers, who is the CEO of Cisco, talk about the challenge we face and compare our status in the world to China today, the No. 2 economy in the world. He compared our situation today to what it was a few years ago.

We are in a position now where we have only one out of four startup companies that we had a few years ago, and it is an indication to me that if America is going to continue to lead in this world, we need to invest in that which makes us strong. I am not saying the deficit is not a problem. It is. But we will still have a Federal budget as we address the deficit and we should invest, through that Federal budget, in what is important, things that build our future.

This morning Senator REID of Nevada talked about the vulnerable in America. Well, I couldn't agree more. We don't hear the words "safety net" around here anymore, and it is unfortunate, because we know that even in this prosperous society there are many unfortunate people. There are children who, through no fault of their own, were born into dysfunctional and poor families, kids whom we try to rescue from their plight and engage them in Head Start, to bring them into a learning atmosphere, a classroom. I have been there, all over my State of Illinois. I was there two weeks ago in Chicago. I went into one of the poorest sections of that great city and saw a room full of 40 of some of the cutest kids in the world from struggling families who were lucky enough to be in the Head Start Program. It means that for the better part of the day, they are in a safe, positive, learning environment. Is that a good thing? Of course it is. Whether it is my son or daughter or your son or daughter, it comes down to the basics. If we don't give our children the right lift-off in their lives, many of them struggle and, unfortunately, many fail.

So when the House Republicans say the way to deal with our deficit is to cut hundreds of thousands of these poor children out of the Head Start Program and to dismiss tens of thousands of teachers and staff, we have to

step back and say, Are you sure? Has it reached that point? Are we at a point now where we have to deny these children access to the kind of learning experience that makes their school experience later on more successful? I don't think so.

An honest look at our deficit would not just go after education and research and investment in our infrastructure. It would look across the board, as the Bowles-Simpson commission did. How can we rationalize at this moment in time cutting Head Start for hundreds of thousands of kids across America, denying money to the poorest school districts in America where they literally struggle day to day to try to turn around the lives of children who are in very dire circumstances?

The House Republicans have suggested cutting Pell grants. Pell grants. Those are the grants given to college students from lower income families. I look back on my life and I guess I was one of those kids. My mother was a widow and I wanted to go to college, and it wasn't a family experience. I needed help. In those days, Pell grants didn't exist, but college loans did, and the Federal college loan came to my rescue.

Well, here I stand today because of that. And for hundreds and thousands of students across America, the Pell grants are their ticket to college. That is how they can get into college, earn a diploma, and succeed in life. When the House Republicans say we have reached the point where we have to cut that assistance to college students across America, you say to yourself, Is it that bad that we have to reach that far?

Let me suggest there are other efforts we ought to look at first. I happen to believe in this great, prosperous Nation that the most prosperous among us—the wealthiest, the people who have benefited the most from this great Nation—can be asked to sacrifice more. I think they should. Asking those at the highest income levels in America to pay more in taxes at this point in our history is not unreasonable and it is not going to kill the economy, and it is simple economic justice. If doing that means we can protect the most vulnerable and protect opportunity for education, I think that is fair.

I also question some of what we are doing. Look at the price of gasoline at gas stations across America today and then watch the next quarterly earnings report of the oil companies and tell me why we continue to funnel billions of taxpayers' dollars into subsidies for the oil companies. They are doing quite well, thank you. They don't need a subsidy that adds to our deficit. The same thing is true in my home State of Illinois. Let me get personal about this. I happen to believe that agriculture is critical to our Nation. I believe we need to be there as a safety net for farmers who can't predict what the weather will be or what crop prices might be, but there are parts of our ag